



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Maryland's Social Services Agency



PRESS RELEASE

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DHR MOVES RECIPIENTS INTO WORKFORCE FOR 12th TIME MEETS FEDERAL WORK PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

BALTIMORE – The Department of Human Resources' Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program has met its federally required work participation rate for fiscal year 2008. Maryland has met this requirement each of the 12 years work participation has been measured. Rule changes at the federal level made it more challenging for states to meet the rate in 2008, but aggressive programming has allowed Maryland to achieve a 36.9 percent participation rate, which for the second year exceeds the national average of 29 percent. While not part of the participation rate measure, the Department notes that more than 9,000 TANF recipients found jobs during this period.

“Maryland has worked hard to move people into jobs,” said Governor Martin O’Malley. “We have been successful because people want to work. They want to become independent and our work programs are an excellent way to help them accomplish this goal.”

TANF is a block grant program designed to make dramatic reforms to the nation’s welfare system by moving recipients to independence and self-sufficiency. It was created by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, which is the national welfare reform law.

As a funding requirement, states must meet the Federal Work Participation Rate (WPR). This rate measures the percentage of recipients who participate for at least 30 hours per week (20 hours for families with a child under age six) in one of twelve federally defined work activities. It is a strict measure, for in order to “count” each month, recipients’ average weekly attendance must meet the requirement noted above. There is no provision for partial credit and no credit for activities other than those defined by the federal agency. States that fail to meet federal participation requirements can face penalties up to 21 percent of their federal grant.

In an effort to increase the work participation rate, Maryland adopted a policy of Universal Engagement. This policy requires TANF applicants and recipients to participate continuously in federally or State defined work activities as a condition of benefit eligibility. The activities may

include barrier removal and employment-related experiences, including but not limited to: unsubsidized employment, paid internships, apprenticeships, work experience, on-the-job training, job search/job readiness training, mental health treatment, rehabilitation services, substance abuse treatment, community service, and vocational education.

Local case managers regularly monitor TANF customers' progress and participation in these work activities. Failure to participate in mandated work activities without good cause results in the denial or closure of TANF benefits.

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The Maryland Department of Human Resources is the state's social service provider. The agency collaborates with 24 local jurisdictions to: provide foster care, adoption, and protective services to children; collect and distribute child support payments; provide protective services, case- management, supportive housing, in-home aide services, and respite care to vulnerable adults; and provide temporary cash, food stamps, and medical assistance to families. It also funds programs for homeless persons, refugees, and migrant- workers, victims of crime and women who are displaced, battered, or assaulted. Last year, DHR served 760,000 people in need. In terms of its annual budget, DHR is Maryland's fourth largest state agency